

Pioneer Hall of Fame Award

Derek Johnson

The University High School Alumni Association honors Derek Johnson, class of 1989, as a 2015 Hall of Fame Alumni Award recipient for his contributions to his profession and civic service.

Johnson graduated from University High School in 1989 after a very successful baseball career, which was highlighted by both All-State and All-Conference honors. He was named a member of the All-State high school baseball team in 1989, and was nominated to the All-Conference high school baseball team for two consecutive years in 1988 and 1989. Johnson recalls that he was fortunate enough to have played for U-High Coach Jim Scott. Coach Scott taught him the finer points of baseball as well as the value of discipline and character.

After high school, Johnson continued his baseball career at Eastern Illinois University where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in physical education. He was selected as an All Mid-Continent Conference pitcher in 1993.

Johnson graduated from Eastern Illinois University in 1994 and began what has become a very accomplished college and professional baseball coaching career. Along with coaching at Eastern, his baseball coaching path also includes Southern Illinois University, Stetson University, and Vanderbilt University. At Vanderbilt University, which is regarded as one of the most prolific college baseball programs in the country, Johnson won National Pitching Coach of the Year honors from Collegiate Baseball News in 2004 and was named Top Assistant Coach of the Year by Baseball America in 2010. In 2011, Johnson's coaching helped Vanderbilt reach the College World Series for the first time when the pitching staff led the Southeastern Conference in ERA and strikeouts. During that year, eight of his Vanderbilt pitchers were selected in the Major League Baseball draft, including two in the first round. In all, six Vanderbilt pitchers coached by Johnson have been selected in the first round, including the Tampa Bay Rays' David Price, the number one overall pick in 2007.

In November 2012, one of Johnson's childhood dreams came true when the Chicago Cubs hired him as their Minor League Pitching Coordinator. He fondly remembers going to Wrigley Field in Chicago as a young boy growing up in Arrowsmith, Ill., and watching Cubs games on television with his grandfather every day in the summer. Now he is responsible for developing and mentoring over 90 Minor League pitchers in the Chicago Cubs organization.

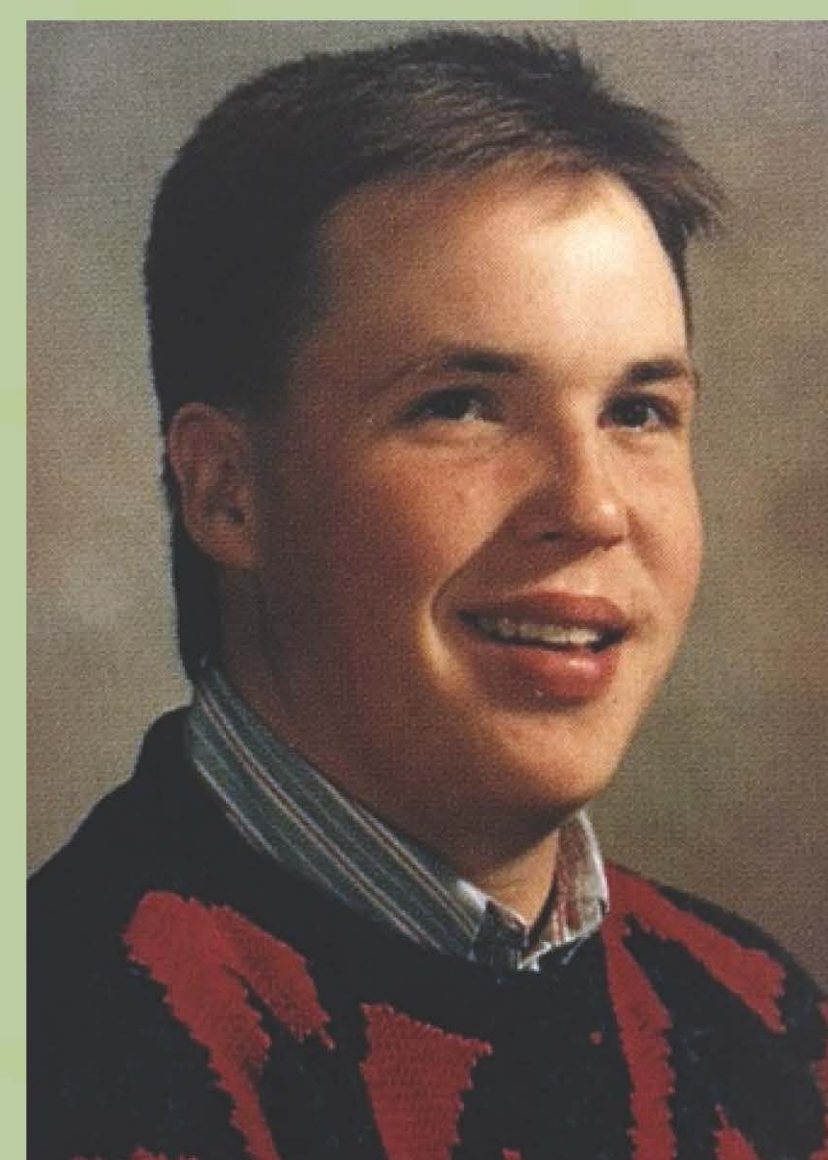
In addition to coaching, Johnson has also authored a book on baseball titled, *The Complete Guide to Pitching*. Published in 2013, it shares his secrets on pitching mechanics, pitch selection, arm care and conditioning, fielding, and mental strategies for dominating the opposition.

Johnson is married to Tasha Huster and they have two children; son Teague and daughter Taite.

"U-High gave me the courage and preparation to pursue my lifelong dream of being involved in professional baseball."

– Derek Johnson

University High School



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